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UNCLAS PARIS 007182

SIPDIS

STATE FOR PM/DTCC - BLUE LANTERN COORDINATOR
ABUJA FOR POL-MIL OFFICER DANIEL AMBROSE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ETTC](#) [KOMC](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: FRANCE: BLUE LANTERN LEVEL 3: PRE-LICENSE END USE

CHECK ON TAA 1551-05

REF: STATE 171558

1. Per reftel, Post Blue Lantern Action Officer attempted to contact MOD officials both directly and indirectly to inquire about French company Avon Communications S.A. However, to date, the MOD has been unresponsive. The Avon company executive we spoke to (see paras 4 and 5 below) said that Avon has years of experience working for the French Navy.

2. Searches of various French business databases and directories did consistently confirm that the company was at the address given in reftel, duly registered and operating since January 1994. Robert Avon is listed as the President; Pascal Avon is listed as the Administrator Director General; and the total number of company employees is given as 14. Company activities listed include storage, maintenance, and telecommunications services. According to French business directory [www.bottin.fr](#), the company had a total annual turnover of 4.259 million euros and net earnings of 483,000 euros for 2003, the only year with financial data listed.

3. A similar database called "Kompass" also confirmed the company's address and principals. In addition, it gave the company's website: [www.avon-com.fr](#). This website, which includes a "Northrup Grumman Electronic Systems Sperry Marine" logo gives "service contact" Patrick Campagnoli and provides his mobile phone number 33-6-13-36-92-09 and email [P_Campagnoli@avon-com.fr](#). The website appears to give no further information or links. Our consul in Marseille visited the company site in the "Village d'Entreprises Saint Henri" and confirmed their place of business.

4. Consul Marseille met with Avon Communications Director General Pascal Avon on October 14. According to him, the company installs, maintains and repairs electronic navigational systems on boats. They also do some work on airplane systems, but not as much (they have some dealings with Eurocopter). Avon represents Sperry Marine (part of Northrop Grumman) and has worked with them for many years all over the world, but especially in Francophone Africa and the Middle East. They work in both the military and private sectors. They have several years of experience working for the French Navy installing and maintaining navigational systems and, according to Mr. Avon, have almost a monopoly on this work. They work primarily on ships built in France, wherever they may be located. Their customers include the French Navy, DCN, THALES, and other foreign Navies: Morocco, Senegal, and Mauritania, among others.

5. Mr. Avon also said that they work on merchant marine vessels and private yachts. He noted that they had a booth at the recent Monaco Yacht Show. Avon has been working with the Nigerian Navy since 2001. According to Mr. Avon, the Nigerians decided they wanted to overhaul and upgrade their old, French-built ships and Avon began by installing Sperry Marine civilian navigational systems. Now they want to install "MK 39 MOD 3A Ring Laser" Inertial Navigation Systems, which is the purpose for this agreement. Only Avon's technicians (French) will be doing the actual installation. Mr. Avon did say they may hire someone locally, but it would be strictly in as a very low-level handyman assistance role. Avon Communications seems to be a thriving business. They have offices in Le Havre, Brest, Saint Nazaire, and Antibes, in addition to their main office in Marseille. Since 1994, it has grown from a one-person repair company to what it is now with 18 full time employees. They work primarily with Sperry Marine. Lastly, Mr. Avon mentioned that they have signed similar TAA's in the past and understood our licensing process.

Stapleton